

## **Young and in Love by miawweasley**

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**Summary:** Eleven can leave Hawkins without telling Mike how she feels. \*SPOILERS FOR ST3\*

## Young and in Love

Eleven had paused on her way out the door, not daring to glance behind her at Mike, only squeezing the teddy bear a little tighter. Mike's words from months ago were pounding through her head.

In that moment she wanted nothing more than to turn around and kiss him a thousand times and admit her mutual feelings for him, but she kept walking out the door. She knew why she didn't turn around, the memories of Hopper (and Brenner) too strong. Everyone she loved turned out to be bad or dead and it was too much for her, she didn't want to have Mike turn out either of those ways.

Peeking her head in through another door, she talked to Joyce, which turned into her sobbing into a letter Hop had written for her and Mike, but more so her. She clung onto it, the paper only slightly crinkling in her palms.

"You okay?" Joyce asked, and she nodded her head.

"Yeah." She was more okay than she had been in a long time. Taking one last look around the house, El sighed. This was the first place that felt like home since Hopper, and she just wasn't ready to let that go. She smiled softly before making her way down the steps, handing a box off to Jonathan before turning towards her crying friends.

She hadn't ever seen them look so lost. She let out a soft sob of her own before clinging onto Lucas, everyone else taking turns hugging Will. When she let go, she turned to Dustin, burying her face in his shoulder.

"Keep that hair healthy so we can still look like twins," he whispered into her ear and she let out a laugh, hugging him a little tighter before releasing him and turning to Max.

The tears really started coming then as she and her best friend rocked back and forth, clinging onto each other as if they were both going to die.

"I love you," they whispered at the same time when they pulled away,

causing them to fall into a fit of giggles. They hugged once more before she turned around to hug the last person in line.

Mike.

She grabbed onto him and hugged tighter than she thought was humanly possible, wanting to savor this moment forever; she breathed in deeply through her nose to gather his scent. He was hugging her tighter than she was him.

"I can't believe I'm losing you again," he said, tears welling up in his eyes.

"It's not forever. Not 353 days," she said softly, smiling slightly before pressing their foreheads together. He smiled too, and they stayed like that until it was time to get going.

She didn't turn around as she got into the truck with Joyce, and she looked over at her newfound mom and nodded, letting her know it was okay to finally drive off. El immediately looking in the rear view mirror and saw Mike, looking the same way he had when she left him to go close the gate.

She realized what she was letting go. She couldn't go without telling him.

"Stop!" she told Joyce, looking into her eyes frantically before the older woman slammed on the brakes, causing Jonathan's car beside them to stop as well and he turned to give them a confused look, as did Will.

El hopped out of the truck and started walking fastly towards the group of friends (who were now sporting confused faces with furrowed brows). She broke out into a run after realizing walking was taking too long. Finally reaching the group, she flung herself into Mike's arms and wrapped her legs around his waist, hugging him tightly.

"El?" he asked confusedly, holding her up as he stroked her curls.

"I love you too," she said, loud enough for everyone to hear. They wore the same faces they did the day Mike confessed he loved her

just 3 months ago.

Wiping her eyes, she let go and kissed him fiercely— his face in her hands —before running back to the truck, hopping in without wiping the grin off her face.

"What the hell was that?" Joyce asked, though there was nothing in her tone that indicated she was mad.

"Just had to say something," she said before allowing them to drive off for good this time.

Nancy patted Mike's shoulder.

"Ah, to be young in love," she said jokingly, but everyone knew how true it is. Max snickered anyways, as did Lucas.

"Shut up," Mike said, shrugging off Nancy's hand.

But they all noticed the way his grin didn't fade, even as they rode their bikes off to their respective homes.

No, there was no denying it.

They were young and in love.